

A Study of Gender-Wise Perceptions towards the Antecedents of Emotional Branding and Their Linkages with Brand Loyalty, with Special Reference to the Indian FMCG Sector

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ABSTRACT

Consumers have a tendency to shift their loyalty from one brand to another on the basis of relevancy of the products and the need to gain better satisfaction. So marketers need to arouse their interests in specific brands by using the tool of emotional branding. Emotional branding touches the emotional nerves of consumers and creates a linkage between the brand and the purchase decision of consumers. Morrison and Crane (2007) defined 'emotional branding' as an engagement of consumers with the brands emotionally, having a deep, intense, and long-term intimate relation. Emotional Branding appeals directly to a consumer's emotions, needs, and ambitions for building the image of the brand. Marketers aim to trigger an emotional response among consumers with emotional branding. They can create a bond by provoking emotions which disrupt traditional consumer decision-making preferences. In this study, the gender-wise (male and female separately) perception towards the antecedents of emotional branding, like brand passion, brand trust, brand personality, and so on have been measured, while linking them towards brand loyalty for FMCG products.

Keywords: Brand Loyalty, Emotional Branding, Branding, Emotions, Perception

INTRODUCTION

The concept of emotional branding was coined by Marc Gobe (2001) over 20 years ago. His philosophy is based on the observation that the relationship between brands and people can take place on an emotional level. He stated that consumers associate with brands and identify themselves with the brand identity. For example, consumers despise Coke if they have a liking for Pepsi. Gobe (2001) stated that brand can connect with people on a personal level by bringing credibility and personality into the relationship. He declares that the world is moving from an industrially driven economy, where every person is dependent on machines, and the controlling power is in the hands of consumers. He further stated that understanding people's emotional needs and desires is the key to success. Emotional branding towards consumer behaviour and customer appeal helps firms and organisations enhance their marketing strategies and competitive advantage

(Castillo, 2018). According to Roberts (2004), emotional branding is a customer-centred, relational, story-driven strategy that creates strong emotional and life-long bonds among consumers and brands. Travis (2000) states that brand has a strong bonding with the consumers. Consumers, as per their needs, have established a relationship with the brands emotionally.

Emotional branding is beyond just the satisfaction; it is the holistic development of an emotional experience that creates a trust-based relationship. Emotional branding leads to brand loyalty, with consumers always finding comfort and satisfaction in the brand of their choice (Thompson, Rindfleisen & Arsel, 2006). It is said that if consumers attach emotionally with the brands, it leads to repeated purchases. They indulge in excessive shopping to relieve stress. Emotional branding has a direct impact on cognitive dissonance, causing it to become congruent with preoccupied psychological states. In today's highly

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structured environment, emotional branding is crucial to the FMCG sector in breaking the cluster through distinctive associations, where products are classified into technological, casual, and benefit brand differentiations. The emotional branding must appeal to consumers strongly and emotionally, so that they can remember the brands for a long time. For example, 'Dabur's Chavanprash' still captures the attention of consumers irrespective of their age, as this brand emotionally appeals to consumers to become strong, powerful, and live long.

The purpose of emotional branding is to create a strong bond between the purchase decision of consumers and brand loyalty by providing the consumers emotions. Emotional branding plays a vital part in the following ways.

- There is a crucial influence of emotional brands on the buyer's experiences, with a durable, solid, and strong connection to a brand accompanied by emotions of bonding, love, or companionship.
- A personality for the brand is created by emotional branding.
- Emotional branding promotes a feeling of brand association through the exploration of consumer's ability to process a message.
- Emotional branding themes and symbols create meaning for the relevant brands.

The following are approaches to emotional branding that can be used to build stronger bonding with consumers.

Care for Your Customers: Marketers need to show their customers that they take care of them. They have to read the customers' psychology; what do they value and what triggers them emotionally. After deciding which emotion should be tapped into, the brand should consistently taps those emotions with the marketing messages. A brand should constantly address customers' emotional needs, from social media to customer care. L'Occitane, a French beauty brand provides customers free gift-wrapping with deliveries, making memorable moments for their customers. Customers feel more appreciated with this way of presentation, than a discount.

Be Consistent: Consistency is an essential component that builds both visibility and trust for a brand, demonstrating a consistent love and style. One can build an emotional

bond by building trust among the consumers. There are some practical ways to enroll brand consistency:

- *Set Out Brand Values:* Marketers have to make decisions that reflect a brand's true personality, and at every level stay on the brand.
- *Create a Set of Brand Guidelines:* There is a need to outline a brand's tone of voice and key design elements, like colour palettes, font, caption, and beautiful presentation of the logo.
- *Social Media Style:* Social media team should post and respond to criticism.
- *Use Shortened URL for Brands:* Customise the brand advertisements with short URL. It will improve brand consistency and build trust.
- *Design Templates Well:* It is simple to create high quality brand content, from presentations to social media images. Then, make it accessible for all users by providing a tempting platform.
- *Monitoring:* Keep an eye on brands appeal and monitor constantly with consumers.

Give Customers an Experience: For emotional branding, marketers sponsor social events and concerts so that consumers can associate with the brands emotionally. They provide a positive experience to their customers through the use of products wherever possible. Coca-Cola "Open Happiness" campaign is a perfect example of this.

Friendly reaction with brand, through a warm human personality, is the best way to connect with the brand. The willingness of knowledge sharing of marketers has helped them establish a tie with the consumers at an emotional level. Emotional branding builds lasting relations and can improve profitability and longevity of business.

ANTECEDENTS OF EMOTIONAL BRANDING

Brand passion is a brand marketing that helps companies bridge gaps in either resources or expertise. Brand passion always helps marketers to generate the right strategies to meet customers' needs or change tastes/preferences. Brand passion is derived from the theory of Sternberg's Triangular of Love (1986), where the three domains of love are presented beautifully in the interwoven elements of intimacy, commitment, and decision. Passion is more than the aforesaid 3 domains of love, as it also includes

an intense feeling for the products. If consumers happen to separate from the brands, it creates mental distress for them (Sarkar, 2014). Thomson et al. (2005) emphasise on the passion that leads to separation distress. Separation distress derives from the person maintaining proximity to the brand. According to Bauer et al. (2007), brand passion can be defined as an extremely positive attitude that leads to emotional attachment with a specific brand and influences relevant behavioural facts. Brand personality is one of the most commonly acknowledged characteristics of a brand; it has piqued the interest of numerous studies. A set of human traits assigned to a brand in the development and maintenance of strong brand relationships is known as brand personality. In simple terms, it refers to the embodiment of a brand. A brand personality emerges when words such as creative, caring, witty, trustworthy, rebellious, dishonest, and so on, are applied to it. Brands are thought to have a personality, which customers employ as a means of self-expression or to enjoy the emotional rewards that distinguish the brand from others (Phau & Lau, 2000). Sincerity, enthusiasm, competence (power), competition, sophistication, and roughness (toughness) are the 5 traits that form a brand's personality. Brand trust is the realisation that brand value may be generated and developed via the management of various factors, other than a customer's happiness with the product's functional performance and features (Aaker, 1996; Lassar et al., 1995). Blackston (1995), Heilbrunn (1995), and Gurviez (1996) all agree that trust research could provide an acceptable paradigm for conceptualising and measuring a more qualitative dimension of brand value. According to Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán (2001), brand trust is a consumer's assurance that the brand will match his or her consumption expectations. To fully visualise brand loyalty, the relationship (brand relationship) metaphor is given. The influence of attitude intensity on loyalty is altered by brand love (Batra, Ahuvia & Bagozzi, 2008).

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Indian purchaser markets are evolving rapidly, with fast development in dispensable incomes, the improvement of modern metropolitan ways of life, and the rise of the sort of trend-conscious customers that India has not found previously. With the expansion of western culture in Indian market, more brands are added. Bigger budget

plan is apportioned to sales deals advancement practices that lure the customers. In such situations, it is necessary to study how purchasers settle on their preferences in type, when there are a few brands in the thoughts of a customer. There is a pattern for a high number of purchasers in the emotional brands to shift from one brand to another because of sales promotion and individual comfort place. Subsequently, it would interest a marketer to know about the customer mentality concerning sales promotion offers; what plans do purchasers favour for what sort of brands, which media they follow to think about the brand, goods, and related plans, who is inclined towards the branded items, the cost-wise range of products, and so on. These are the issues which buyers consider while picking a brand. Brands create client reliability by conveying amazing value regardless of the value point (high, low, or medium). To the customer, a brand name speaks to familiarity, consistency, and trust in performance. Brand names when connected with the way of life, self-expression, and aspirations epitomise intangibles that are attractive to the buyer. The study shows that brand loyalty has manifold advantages, like emotional consequences for productivity, longer residency as a client, and lower affectability to cost increment. Consequently, enthusiastic branding has more impact in pulling the customers towards specific brands.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ghorbanzadeh et al. (2020) stated in their study that emotional advertising messages impact consumer behaviour; to sustain emotional consumer-brand relationships, brand managers tend to create passionate brands. Tiwari et al. (2019) discussed that luxury buying is perceived as an experience rather than a financial expense. Luxury brands are often directly related to the people who consistently attempt to see the essence of high societies and prioritise luxury and expensive products to show social prestige. Leahy (2018) explored that brand loyalty has both cognitive and emotional reasons from the perspective of consumers. The study was conducted on FMCG sector, where the development of brand loyalty is predicted by brand association and brand personality. The study concluded that brand loyalty has stronger bonds with the customers and is long lasting. There are various reasons for customers to buy a product, like performance of products, price, convenience, availability,

after sales services, and so on; these reasons positively affect customers and compel them to maintain a strong relationship with brands. Gupta and Schivinski (2017) talked about the case history and outcomes of brand reliability. The examination has distinguished five classifications of the case history to brand loyalty, related to the buyer, brand, social, business, and social variables. Moreover, discoveries have recommended that false dedication can bring about social outcomes; premium loyalty can bring about both conduct and attitudinal outcomes; and inactive loyalty attitudinal outcomes. Chakraborty (2016) stated a deep comprehension of how interpersonal influence, brand image, brand consciousness, and different demographic characteristics are related to the young Indian consumers' brand purchase decisions in the FMCG sector. The study has examined the effect of men and women, belonging to the age groups 18-27 and 28-35, on purchase decision of branded products. Dehestani et al. (2014) conducted a study to find the effects of brand association, brand awareness, distribution intensity, and quality perception on brand loyalty. The data were collected from 200 Nokia mobile phone users. The results revealed that there is a positive relationship between perception of quality as well as brand awareness and brand loyalty. Akgun et al. (2013) stated in their study about the importance of emotional branding, on which the company's survival depends in the world of cut-throat competition. The companies need to establish deep, long-lasting, and strong brand association with the products. The study found that emotion-based branding has the potential to capture the attention of consumers for a long time and this will help the marketers introduce new products in the market. Douglas et al. (2011) studied the factors which have an emotional appeal among the consumers; and how the consumer's association with brands emotionally leads to repeated purchases. The study found that the marketers need to understand the antecedents of emotional appealing so that consumers can place their trust on brands, thus converting it into brand loyalty.

RESEARCH GAP

The above reviews have shed light on emotional branding as a branding strategy, and its relation with brand loyalty. These reviews show the inner passion of consumers for the brands, and once they find satisfaction, they are

very loyal to the brands. Most of the earlier studies have been done without knowing the perception of males and females, separately. Studies that create a linkage between males and females' perception about antecedents of emotional branding and its impact on creation of brand loyalty are largely missing, and creates a huge research gap. In pursuit of filling this gap in this study, we try to analyse the linkage between the antecedents of emotional branding, like brand passion, brand personality, brand trust, brand relationship, and so on, with brand loyalty in the fast-moving consumer goods segment, taking their opinion gender wise.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the perception of male and female consumers towards brand personality (an antecedent of emotional branding).

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the perception of male and female consumers towards brand passion (an antecedent of emotional branding).

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in the perception of male and female consumers towards brand trust (an antecedent of emotional branding).

H₀₄: There is no significant difference in the perception of male and female consumers towards brand relationship (an antecedent of emotional branding).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research design comprises the model on factors related to branding, methods used in this research, and sampling. In the present study, the researcher has approached consumers. The sample size is 600. The sample is selected through this technique because of convenience. The study is based on primary data collected from Indian consumers from a few cities (Indore, Delhi, Mumbai, Bhopal, Bengaluru, Jaipur, and other small towns) across India. Through t-test, hypotheses were proved.

RESULTS

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the perception of male and female consumers towards brand personality (an antecedent of emotional branding).

Table 1: T-Test on Gender and Brand Personality

<i>Antecedent of EB</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>T-Value</i>	<i>*Sig.</i>
Brand Personality	Male	238	3.23	.9566	2.552	.011
	Female	362	3.43	.9371		

*Significant at 0.05.

The table exhibits the mean score and t-value for gender and brand personality (an antecedent of emotional branding). It shows that the mean of female is higher (3.43) than male (3.23), and the t-value is 2.552 greater than 1.96, which is significant at $.011 < 0.05$. Hence, it is concluded that there is a significant difference in the perception of male and female consumers towards brand personality (an antecedent of emotional branding). So, the null hypothesis, 'There is no significant difference in the perception of male and female consumers towards brand personality (an antecedent of emotional branding)', is not accepted.

H_{02} : There is no significant difference in the perception of male and female consumers towards brand trust (an antecedent of emotional branding).

Table 2: T-Test on Gender and Brand Trust

<i>Antecedent of EB</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>T-Value</i>	<i>*Sig.</i>
Brand Trust	Male	238	3.67	.8583	1.606	.109
	Female	362	3.79	.8321		

*Significant at 0.05.

The table exhibits the mean score and t-value for gender and brand trust (an antecedent of emotional branding). It shows that the mean of female is nearly equal (3.79) to male (3.67), and the t-value is 1.606 lower than 1.96, which is not significant at $.109 > 0.05$. Hence, it is concluded that there is no significant difference in the perception of male and female consumers towards brand trust (an antecedent of emotional branding). So, the null hypothesis, 'There is no significant difference in the perception of male and female consumers towards brand trust (an antecedent of emotional branding)', is accepted.

H_{03} : There is no significant difference in the perception of male and female consumers towards brand passion (an antecedent of emotional branding).

Table 3: T-Test on Gender and Brand Passion

<i>Antecedent of EB</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>T-Value</i>	<i>*Sig.</i>
Brand Passion	Male	238	3.34	.9963	2.063	.040
	Female	362	3.50	.9595		

*Significant at 0.05.

The table exhibits the mean score and t-value for gender and brand passion (an antecedent of emotional branding). It shows that the mean of female is higher (3.50) than male (3.34), and the t-value is 2.063 greater than 1.96, which is significant at $.040 < 0.05$. Hence, it is concluded that there is a significant difference in the perception of male and female consumers towards brand passion (an antecedent of emotional branding). So, the null hypothesis, 'There is no significant difference in the perception of male and female consumers towards brand passion (an antecedent of emotional branding)', is not accepted.

H_{04} : There is no significant difference in the perception of male and female consumers towards brand relationship (an antecedent of emotional branding).

Table 4: T-Test on Gender and Brand Relationship

<i>Antecedent of EB</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>T-Value</i>	<i>*Sig.</i>
Brand Relationship	Male	238	3.49	.9122	1.116	.265
	Female	362	3.52	.8448		

*Significant at 0.05.

The table exhibits the mean score and t-value for gender and brand relationship (an antecedent of emotional branding). It shows that the mean of female is nearly equal (3.52) to male (3.49), and the t-value is 1.116 lower than 1.96, which is not significant at $.265 > 0.05$. Hence, it is concluded that there is no significant difference in the perception of male and female consumers towards brand relationship (an antecedent of emotional branding). So, the null hypothesis, 'There is no significant difference in the perception of male and female consumers towards brand relationship (an antecedent of emotional branding)', is accepted.

CONCLUSION

Consumers choose those brands that have a personality. Considering this, branded companies should focus on bold designs according to the expectations of consumers, which will have a direct emotional appeal to the youth. With changing consumers' expectations and preferences, brands need to refresh their collections, designs, ranges, and quality, so that they can attract consumers by appealing to them emotionally. If brands are marketed with different tools in this new digital environment, since those consumers have already established the habit of continuing on with those brands, businesses have no choice but to remain relevant and appealing to the existing as well as new consumers. A sense of exclusivity should be created to maintain consumer desire through scarcity and rarity. It will evoke the desire to buy brands related to FMCG products. The brand is the sum of consumers' values, inspiration, and taste, and so it should be represented by a distinctive style that would be reflected in designs. Branding should be established from the overall look of the products to social media content, to how consumers experience and shop the brand; however, it needs to be consistent from the get go.

In this study, most consumers are female. So, it is generally observed that women have an emotional association with brands and they continue with the same brands, unless they find some issues with the quality. On the other hand, men have a tendency to change brands because they do not want to stay with the same brands for a long time.

The findings disclosed that women feel that a brand communicates a lot and they can position their image in society through brand personality. Through brands they can project their personality easily and develop the power of dominance. The findings also stated that women trust brands quickly compared to men, wherein the latter take more time to trust a brand. Further, it was found that credibility of the products influenced the purchasing intention of consumers. The result indicated that there is a difference between male and female when it comes to brand passion, as brands appeal more to women than men. It makes more of an impression on females and fascinates them while purchasing. Women have that kind of curiosity in owning a particular brand and they become sentimental with the same. For brand relationship with brand loyalty, women are more concerned with the product attributes. Brands offer more personalised services, and so they are

emotionally linked to a particular brand; this emotion helps them stay with the existing brand.

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